

<b>Committee(s):</b> Policy Resources and Economic Development	<b>Date:</b> 18 <sup>th</sup> March 2020
<b>Subject:</b> Blue Badge Legislation Change	<b>Wards Affected:</b> All
<b>Report of</b> Greg Campbell – Director of Environment	<b>Public Yes</b>
<b>Report Author/s:</b> Name: Greg Campbell, Director of Environment Telephone: 01277 312500 E-mail: greg.campbell@brentwood.gov.uk	<b>For Decision</b>

### Summary

This report is in response to a Member's motion passed at Ordinary council on 8 October 2019

This report therefore considers whether following new legislation introduced in August 2019 there is a need to increase the 'Blue Badge' parking bays in our car parks.

That following investigations it appears to indicate that whilst Blue badge bays are well used there is sufficient capacity.

### Recommendation(s)

**Members are asked to:**

- R1. Agree that Parking Officers continue to monitor the parking across all Council managed car parks in order that if changes are required these can be brought back before Committee for decision.**
  
- R2. Based on the information gathered no change is made to the present number of accessible spaces available.**
  
- R3. Improve the publicity of the availability of accessible spaces in Council owned car parks**

### Main Report

#### **Introduction and Background**

1. This report considers the motion to Ordinary Council on October 8<sup>th</sup> 2019 min 235 that requested:

*“In light of the excellent news that the blue badge scheme will be extended to those with mental health issues as well as physical disabilities so they can access shops, travel and services, Brentwood Council will take a proactive approach to this by instructing officers to review the blue badge parking available to establish whether there is a demand and need to increase and bringing a report on their findings to the Council’s PRED Committee”.*

2. The motion follows a consultation issued in January 2018 on extending the eligibility for Blue Badges to those suffering from a mental, cognitive or intellectual disability and to those people who receive 12 points for the ‘Planning and Following Journeys’ activity of the mobility component of Personal Independence Payment (PIP), for non-physical mobility issues. On the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2019 these changes came into force.
3. Following the motion to Ordinary Council the investigative work set out below was undertaken to determine our recommendation:
  - Confirmation as to the legislative requirement to provide accessible spaces
  - Confirmation of the increase in blue badge requests since the change in legislation
  - Confirmation as to whether there has been an increase specifically in the Brentwood area for requests for Blue Badges
  - A review of the number of the accessible spaces available and recent changes and improvements
  - A survey of the accessible spaces occupied at William Hunter Way, Chatham Way, the Multi Storey Car Park, Hunters Avenue and Friars Avenue was carried out
  - Information on enquiries and complaints received from Blue Badge holders unable to park in accessible spaces was gathered

### **Issue, Options and Analysis of Options**

4. Below is a chart that identifies the number of spaces available in our main car parks in Brentwood and Shenfield, the number of accessible spaces presently provided within those car parks and the number recommended by the Parking Standards Design and Good Practice.

Car Park	Number of Parking Spaces Available	Guideline - Accessible Spaces	Actual Accessible Spaces Provided
Multi storey Car park	547	26	20
Chatham Way	125	3	5
William Hunter Way	371	19	37
Hunters Avenue	48	3	3
Friars Avenue	62	3	1

5. Further there are 19 On Street Accessible spaces in Brentwood High Street and 4 in Shenfield High Street.

Recent improvements to Blue Badge / accessible parking have included:

- Increasing the quality and number of accessible parking spaces at William Hunter Way
- Repositioning the newly provided accessible spaces in William Hunter Way Car Park close to the pedestrian crossing, providing easy access to the shops
- Relocating the accessible spaces at Merrymeade House closer to the entrance and the accessible entrance.
- Amending the Parking Order to reduce the free parking period for people with Blue badges to 3 hours. This followed consultation with Brentwood Access Group to discourage a single vehicle usage of a single space all day. This has freed up significant capacity.
- Closer working with SEPP and Brentwood's Enforcement Officers to address blue badge parking abuse in Brentwood High Street.

6. Following investigations, it has been confirmed by Essex County Council, who administer the blue badge scheme that:
  - There has been an increase overall in the last year since the introduction of the new scheme of circa 400 applications.
  - In total 244 blue badges have so far been awarded under the Non-visible (hidden) disability criteria.
  - No local geographical information is available
  - ECC and Brentwood have no records of receiving complaints due to lack of availability of disabled parking spaces since the new criteria went live.
  
7. Following two-week surveys undertaken at William Hunter Way, Chatham Way, the Multi Storey Car Park, Hunters Avenue and Friars Avenue, where the number of accessible spaces were monitored to see how many were available at different times during the morning and afternoon. It was identified that:
  - At William Hunter Way - at no point were all the accessible spaces occupied
  - At Chatham Way - on four occasions there were no accessible spaces available
  - At the Multi Storey Car park - at no point were all the accessible parking spaces occupied
  - At Hunters Avenue Car Park - at no point during the survey were all the accessible spaces occupied
  - At Friars Avenue Car Park - during the survey 38% of the time the accessible space was occupied
  
8. Although we cannot say whether demand specifically to the Brentwood area has increased, we can confirm that only on four occasions were all spaces taken up in one of our smaller Brentwood Town Centre car parks. Further, at one of the car parks in Shenfield only 62% of the time was an accessible space available when the survey was carried out.
  
9. The demand for Blue Badges has increased and the number approved has also increased. However, this increase applies across the County and it is therefore difficult to confirm what the impact specifically at this time on Brentwood Car Parks will necessarily be.
  
10. It appears that although the Parking Standards identify that the Multi Storey Car Park does not have its full quota of accessible spaces it is the least used by Blue

Badge holders. In fact, the number of cars in accessible spaces during the survey was approximately 20%. This could be due to the fact that people prefer surface car parks. However, it could also be that these spaces are not publicised that well.

11. Further the Friars Avenue Car Park which also had full occupancy for over 38% of the time and is below the required accessible parking spaces as set out by Parking Standards is complemented by Hunters Avenue Car Park which was not up to full capacity at any point during the survey.
12. Based on the information gathered it does not appear that at this point in time there is a need to increase the number of accessible bays. However, it is recommended:
  - that the situation continues to be monitored in order that if changes are necessary that these are brought back before committee for decision.
  - to actively publicise the blue badge spaces available in all Council owned car parks

### **Reasons for Recommendation**

13. There are no statistics or projections available that indicate that the additional badges issued have or will have a significant impact on demand for parking.
14. It is recommended therefore that the Parking Team continue to monitor and manage the Council owned car parks and to work with ward members to address any issues that arise.

### **Consultation**

15. Consultation has been carried out with Brentwood Access Group who make the following comments:
  - They broadly agree with the findings
  - They suggest that the natural increase in Blue Badges and not the low increase in Blue Badges for mental health reasons should trigger a review every 5 – 10 years
  - They acknowledge that the Boroughs car parks are, on the whole, up to national required standards, the exception being the Multi Storey Car Park where 6 spaces are below guidelines

- Brentwood Access suggest :-
  - no increase in Blue Badge parking spaces
  - one more Blue Badge space be added to Chatham Way Car Park as it is very well used and convenient for disabled users
  - That better signposting for William Hunter Way Blue Badge spaces is provided
  - That at the Hunters Avenue Car Park no change in space numbers are needed but maintenance of the footpaths for wheelchair/scooter users is needed
  - That because of Friars Avenues convenience and level access to the shops and the library that 3 more bays are added to bring it up to 1 over guidelines.

## **References to Corporate Plan**

16. Developing our communities – Encourage residents to lead active healthy and fulfilling lifestyles.

## **Implications**

### **Financial Implications**

**Name/Title: Jacqueline Van Mellaerts, Director of Corporate Resources**

**Tel/Email: 01277 312500/jacqueline.vanmellaerts@brentwood.gov.uk**

17. Resources have been utilised within exiting budgets within the medium term financial plan.

### **Legal Implications**

**Name & Title: Amanda Julian, Director of Law and Governance**

**Tel & Email: 01277 312702/amanda.julian@brentwood.gov.uk**

18. The Blue Badge (Disabled Persons' Parking) Scheme was introduced in 1971 under Section 21 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 ('the 1970 Act') and has recently been amended by the Disabled Persons (Badges for Motor Vehicles) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2019. The aim of the

scheme is to help people with severe mobility problems caused by visible and non-visible ('hidden') disabilities to access goods and services, by allowing them to park close to their destination. The scheme is open to eligible people irrespective of whether they are travelling as a driver or as a passenger.

19. The scheme provides a national range of on-street parking concessions to Blue Badge holders. It allows them to park without charge or time limit in otherwise restricted on-street parking environments and allows them to park on yellow lines for up to three hours, unless a loading ban is in place.
20. The Council in order to satisfy its Public Sector Equality duty under s149 Equality Act 2010 must consider if the provision of car parking spaces for blue badge scheme holders is adequate to enable them to access goods and services to satisfy the aims of the scheme. By monitoring advertising the availability of parking spaces the Council is showing that it has in place measures to satisfy its duty under s149.

### **Economic Implications**

**Name/Title: Phil Drane, Director of Planning & Economy**

**Tel/Email: 01277 312500/philip.drane@brentwood.gov.uk**

21. It is important that the borough's town and village centres are accessible to everyone. Good accessibility through measures such as sufficient blue badge parking can create a positive impact on the local economy."

**Other Implications** (where significant) – i.e. Health and Safety, Asset Management, Equality and Diversity, Risk Management, Section 17 – Crime & Disorder, Sustainability, ICT.

### **Background Papers**

House of Commons Briefing papers 1360 Blue Badges and parking for disabled people in England  
Parking Standards Design and Good Practice

### **Appendices to this report**

22. None